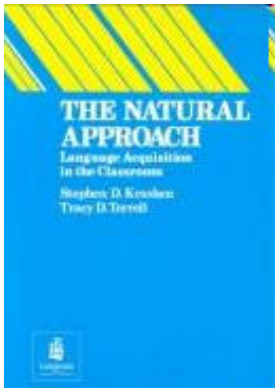
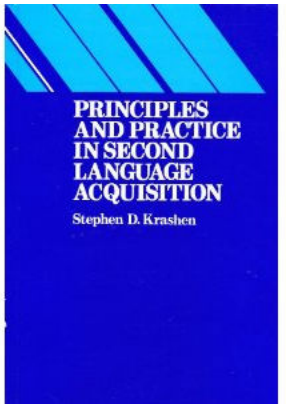
Stephen Krashen
and *Relevant Hypotheses*
on Second Language Acquisition

S.L.A., February 2015
Presentation for Discussion and Expansion

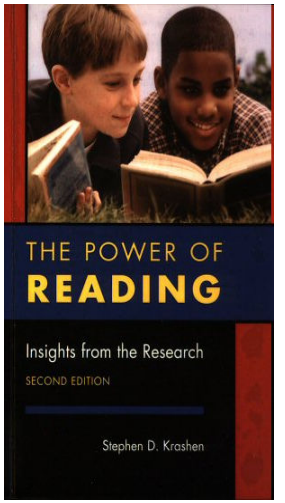
References: Krashen (1988), Ellis (1990), Brown (2000)

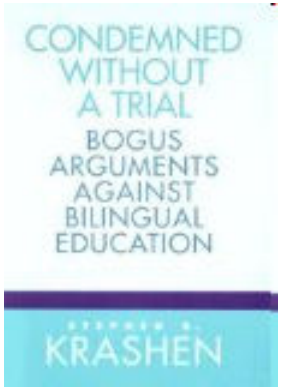
Who Is Stephen Krashen?





- Born in 1941, Krashen is a linguist and professor *emeritus* at the University of Southern California, best known for his research work and theories on second language acquisition (SLA), reading, learning, and language education programs.
- Krashen's contributions to the field of SLA have impacted teaching approaches for 30 years.
- In addition, Dr. Krashen has played an active role in defending bilingual education against political agendas seeking its reduction or elimination from American public schools.





Krashen's Hypotheses: The Affective Filter

- In *Second Language Acquisition* (1981), Dr. Krashen addresses earlier proposals on how emotional factors play a role in the success rate of acquiring a second language. Feelings of insecurity, doubt, anxiety, or decreased interest interfere with learning, and therefore must be addressed in the crafting of lesson plans and by language instructors.

- Emotions may act as *negative filters* which reduce the quality and amount of language exchanged between a L1 speaker and a L2 listening learner, thus generating "input" reduction or partial blockage.

- The lowering of affective filters by reassuring techniques and ongoing positive feedback should promote self-esteem and increased confidence, and therefore foster a faster rate of language exchange and production.

Krashen's Hypotheses: Comprehensible Input

- Dr. Krashen attempted to demonstrate the connection between effective language acquisition on the basis of *authentic input* on learners provided by a realistic context.

- Second language (L2) acquisition is a progressive equation that moves away from the learner's first language only if new skills are built on genuine previous L2 skills (*i + 1* incremental formula). Comprehensible input facilitates the ongoing process of SLA.

- A *natural order* for SLA rules over any perceived *teaching order* for language skills. While genuine L2 input is critical, L2 output (as in talking) is not always the best assessment of SLA progress.

Krashen's Hypotheses: *Monitor* Theory

- The monitor hypothesis aims to demonstrate that already acquired, knowledge functions as an ongoing monitor for a learner's own target language production. As a learner generates output in the second language, this is being checked at a conscious level in search for errors, prompting for self-correction or seeking constant alert cues from listeners.

- The monitor theory attempts to explain why younger learners may not be too self-aware on errors, while older and adult learners are, particularly when suing listening and speaking skills.

Krashen's Hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning Theory

- Dr. Krashen focused a great deal of his research into establishing the true validity and contrast between the terms *learning* and *acquiring* in SLA.

- Language *acquisition* is defined as meaningful gain process at the subconscious level of language skills with a similar degree of permanency as when one's native language is acquired.

- In contrast, language *learning* occurs when an individual is aware of what language skills he/she is gaining, as presented through formal instruction, rules, examples and feedback for errors.

- Dr. Krashen defines language acquisition as a skills gains process which language learning cannot overcome or surpass in terms of *long-lasting, effective* validity.

Krashen's Views on Grammar

- It's a synonym for *conscious learning.*
- It has *supporting*, not central functions, in a pedagogical program.
- It assists *Monitor* performance, provided that time and environment are positive factors, but it may also generate "incompetent" *Monitor* use and *mask* temporary learning as permanent acquisition.
- Grammar rules should be "*learnable*", or easy to understand and explain.
- In second language acquisition, e*rror correction* will be effective only if it's done when learnable rules are taught and *Monitor* use is conscious, consistent and not limited by other factors.

Krashen's Views on Language Teaching and *True* Acquisition

- *Dr. Krashen's contributions ushered a period of teaching practices alternatively referred as the Natural Approach and/or Communicative Approach Eras, becoming the norm for over 20 years; according to these, language input* should be:

- Comprehensible,
- Of interest to its *acquirers,*
- Not based on grammar-sequencing, and
- Provided in sufficient quantity.